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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BUENOS AIRES 002291

SIPDIS

FOR U/S LARSON, WHA FOR A/S NORIEGA, WHA FOR PDAS DERHAM,  
WHA/BSC, WHA/EPSC, AND EB FOR A/S WAYNE, EB/IFD/OMA  
PASS NSC FOR TOM SHANNON, MIKE DEMPSEY, NILMINI GUNARATNE,  
AND DEL RENIGAR  
PASS USTR FOR PETER ALLGEIER, SUE CRONIN  
USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/10/2014

TAGS: ETRD PGOV PREL AR MERCOSUR FTAA

SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT DUHALDE ON KIRCHNER, FTAA AND  
VENEZUELA

Classified By: Ambassador Lino Gutierrez for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Former President Eduardo Duhalde claims that a MERCOSUR-led "South American Union" will be announced before year's end. He democratic solution was the only way out of the current conflict, though he expressed the opinion that a Chavez victory would be better on the

¶2. (SBU) Former President of Argentina and President of the MERCOSUR Commission Eduardo Duhalde (protect) came over for coffee at the Residence August 9. Duhalde arrived ten minutes early, and said, "Unlike others (read President Kirchner) I am always punctual."

Still Bitter

¶3. (C) It was clear that Duhalde still feels he was slighted by the USG during his term as president. He said the United States "disrespected after September 11. Despite Duhalde's hurt feelings, he opined that President Bush's reelection would be "better for Argentina," since he has

Toward a South American Union

¶4. (SBU) Duhalde said South America is moving inexorably toward a "South American Union" which will be announced by the end of the year. The Paraguay to create a special fund to help Paraguay and Bolivia.

FTAA

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¶5. (SBU) "We want free trade, but on fair terms," Duhalde proclaimed. The WTO agreement in Geneva provides an opportunity for the elimination

Relationship with Kirchner

¶6. (C) Regarding his reportedly rocky relationship with President Kirchner, "I want to help him," Duhalde assured. I repeated President Bush' his cabinet," he said. "They are all centrist or center-right," and he specifically mentioned Minister of Defense Jose Pampuro, Minister of th Vido? "I don't know him well, but he's a classic Peronist."

¶7. (C) In Duhalde's view, Kirchner has made a tactical mistake by placing himself on the center-left side of the political spectrum. "He's nc in office. Until then, Duhalde sees no other choice but to help Kirchner. Will Kirchner challenge Duhalde's control of BA province by running happen. Duhalde expects an agreement with Kirchner on the selection of provincial candidates for next year's election.

Venezuela

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¶8. (C) Duhalde confirmed he will leave on Thursday for Venezuela, where he will be an electoral observer at the August 15 referendum. He is

Other Countries

¶9. (C) President Alvaro Uribe in Colombia is Duhalde's favorite president. "Colombia's problem is our problem. When I was Menem's vice-presic

Comment

¶10. (C) Duhalde was tanned (unusual in the Southern Hemisphere winter) and in good spirits. He still feels Argentina and the Hemisphere owe h

¶11. (C) As the strong man of Buenos Aires province, which contains one third of the Argentine population, Duhalde remains thesecond- most powe denies), for the corruption of the Buenos Aires Province government and police, and by some in the Left for the death of two piqueteros during Duhalde will remain a force to be reckoned with in Argentina for some time to come. GUTIERREZ